Response from Prof. Alex Halavais-

Some notes:

1. Why thumbprint. The technology for standard card-readers is already there, and familiar to the customer.

2. You can try to keep out non-registered folks, but this simply doesn't work. Shopping even for staple goods is a social act--a quick trip to your local Walmart will confirm this--and keeping out non-registered members will make it less social. That's why non-member guests are always allowed at Costco, BJ's, etc..

Second, people will piggyback through automated doors. They do in the group ATMs in NYC, and as a result, most 24 hour ATMs have real live security guards. It's pretty natural for people to hold doors for the next comer, and something you probably don't want to force customers *not* to do. Absenting any on-site security creates all sorts of interesting risks--not the least of which is legal liability.

High-powered RFID membership cards might help in the process, though.

3. Outsourcing customer service (telecenters) makes up only a portion of your user experience. People who come to a store do so in part because they don't want to interact with a machine. Moreover, it may be cheaper to outsource user interactions throughout the store.

4. On the other hand, certain pieces of the cleaning regimen and restocking could be significantly helped by technology. Why not a full time sweeper robot?

5. Locative technologies need not remain entirely in the cart. Would be nice if you could either follow one of our sweeper bots or if a pathway lit up for you.

6. People won't carry PDAs--they haven't for some time. Integration with regular, voice (or text) cellphones?